## E-911 Emergency VoIP 911 Services

E-911 VoIP services leave plenty to be desired, and many users may not realize the technology is flawed until they actually need it. Users have reported busy signals, or being connected to the wrong substation and one user was apparently even connected to an insurance agent. Unregulated 9-1-1 service could be dangerous.

As VoIP becomes more popular and some users consider ditching their land-line service, there are questions emerging about who will ensure that these services work. Until states can at least regulate the 9-1-1 component, your safety in an emergency cannot be ensured.

Every second is vital when you or someone you love needs 9-1-1. Don't take a chance that the assistance you need desperately may be severely delayed or not arrive at all because your location cannot be determined.

Talbot County wants you to be aware of the issues with VoIP concerning 9-1-1 and strongly suggests that you continue to have available and to use your conventional landline for these services.

Before the Call

When to Call

Making the Call

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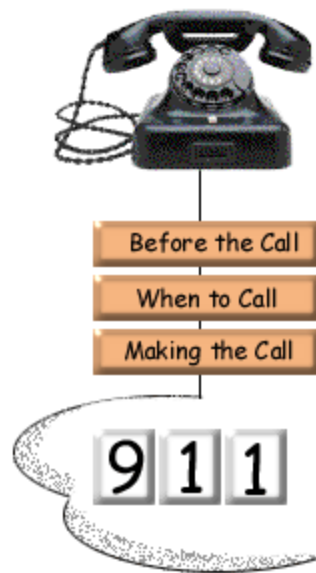
Brought to you by the:

**Talbot County
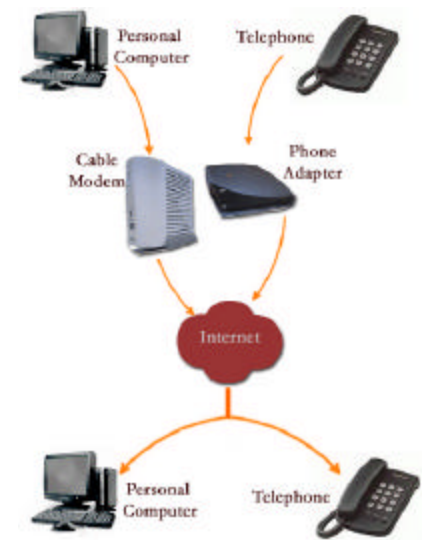Emergency Management Agency**

Talbot County Operations Center
605 Port Street
Easton, Maryland 21601

Phone: 410-770-8160
Fax: 410-770-8163
Email: mullikin@talbgov.org

Public Safety with
Pride & Commitment

CITIZEN INFORMATION ON VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VoIP)

Brought to you by the:

**Talbot County
Emergency Management
Agency**

WHAT IS VoIP?

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is a technology that allows you to make telephone calls using a broadband Internet connection instead of a regular (analog) phone line. Some services using VoIP may only allow you to call other people using the same service, but others may allow you to call anyone who has a telephone number, including local, long distance, mobile and international numbers. Some services may charge for all or some of these services and others may not. Also, while some services only work over your computer or a special VoIP phone, other services allow you to use a traditional phone through an adapter. A broadband Internet connection is required to make VoIP calls.

How does it work?

VoIP converts the voice signal from your telephone into a digital signal that travels over the internet. If you are calling a regular phone number, the signal is then converted back at the other end. Internet Voice can allow you to make a call directly from your computer. If you make a call using a phone with an adaptor, you'll be able to dial just as you always have, and the service provider may also provide a dial tone with a phone number. Then a person can call you from his or her regular phone without using special equipment. VoIP offers technology and services not available with a regular phone. You can make calls and still be connected to the Internet surfing the web or looking up something.

The problem is that the technology has surpassed the ability to determine solutions to issues which affect citizens, particularly emergency communications.

So if VoIP technology is available and ready, what's the problem?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has worked to create an environment promoting competition and innovation to benefit consumers. Historically, the FCC has not regulated the internet or the services provided over it. On February 12, 2004, the FCC found than an entirely Internet– based VoIP service was an unregulated information service. On the same day, the FCC began a broader proceeding to examine what its role should be in this new environment of increased consumer choice and what it can best do to meet its role of safeguarding the public interest.

There are some things to consider:

- Some VoIP services don't work during power outages and the service provider may not offer backup power.

- It is doubtful, at least at the present time, for most VoIP services to seamlessly connect with the 9-1-1 dispatch center or to identify the location of VoIP 911 callers. This is of particular concern. Providing emergency services in a timely manner to our residents and visitors is essential. VoIP cripples the enhanced services of the 9-1-1 Center in knowing where you are when you need help by identifying the phone number and address of the location of your call.

- The Internet does not associate geographic information with an IP address. This needs to be remedied in the interest of public safety. Basically if you tried to make a 9-1-1 call using a VoIP connection, you may get the 9-1-1 Center where your Internet service provider is located. Let's say by chance you get Talbot County's 9-1-1 Center—Nothing comes up on our screen providing us your address. Suppose you are unable to communicate or a child called because you were ill and didn't know the address, we would not have any idea where to send the emergency services you needed.

- **Four things must happen seamlessly in the process of handling an emergency call:**

    Identify a call as an emergency call.

    Route the call to the appropriate PSAP.

    Identify the location of the caller.

    Provide a call-back number to PSAP In the event the call is disconnected.

No doubt, VoIP is here and is great technology in many ways. Talbot County wants you to be aware of its deficiencies at the present time, especially in regard to emergency services.

If you have any questions in regard to VoIP, please don't hesitate to contact the **Talbot County Emergency Management Agency at 410-770-8160.**

Until all the kinks are worked out, please continue to use your regular telephone line to make emergency calls.